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How shall we answer the challenge to Israel?, 1931.

"HOW SHALL WE ANSWER THE CHALLENGE TO ISRAEL?"

DELIVERED BY

RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER
AT THE TEMPLE
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 15th, 1931.

Occasionally one reads a book or an article about the Jews which gives one the pleasant sensation that somehow the world is moving forward. To this category belongs the article recently published in Harper's Magazine called "The Challenge to Israel."

It is from the pen of Prof. William Oertgen who is the professor of economics and sociology at Smith College. It is a fine comprehensive statement of the position of the Jew in the world today and his possible meaning to modern civilization. It gives evidence of a keen, fine, analytical mind of a man who could bring both objectivity and sympathy to the subject. And above all, it is an article free from venom and from honey.

The very name of the article, "The Challenge to Israel" betrays the fact that the Jew is still the challenge to the Gentiles. Seemingly the Jew is as much of a problem to the Gentiles as he is to himself. We are all rather morbidly sensitive about ourselves and always think of ourselves in terms of a problem.

You know, of course, the story told of the four men who were asked to write a dissertation on the albatross. One was an Englishman and he at once went to the country where the albatross is supposed to live

and made a very careful study from first-hand observation, of the life and the habits of the albatross and wrote a treatise of its natural habitation.

The next was a German who at once went to the great libraries and traced down every book that had anything to say about the albatross. And he wrote a voluminous and highly technical treatise which he called: a volume full of scientific references and foot notes.

The third was a Frenchman and he wrote a perfectly charming and delightful treatise of the albatross and his amours.

The fourth was a Jew. He at once wrote a somber and doleful treatise on the albatross and his relation to the Jewish problem.

The Jew is still the mystery, still the enigma, both to himself and to the outside world. He can't be ignored, he can't be overlooked, he can't be destroyed for somehow he is like that bone stuck in the throat of the animal of which the Rabbis spoke, which can not be swallowed or ejected. It is stuck.

For some he presents a sociologic and biologic phenomenon which incites scholars to research and investigation. The Jew! The Jew! Always the Jew!

He is the student that is thrown out from the classroom of the universities of Warsaw and Budapest and Bucharest and Vienna. He is the man against whom eight or ten million Nazis are today singing their medieval songs of hate in the modern cities of Germany. He is the Cabinet Minister in

England, the Supreme Court Justice in the United States. He is the millionaire in Wall Street and the pauper in half the countries of Europe. He is Freud, Bergson and Einstein. He is the bootlegger and the racketeer. The Jew! The Jew! Always the Jew! He is nationalist and assimilationist. He is radical and reactionary. He is the pious man and the scoffer. He is the agnostic and he is the martyr, servile and proud.

The Gentile simply can not understand him. And so he writes books about him. And most of the books are preposterously unreal. But occasionally one comes across a book or an article that is intelligent and understanding which gives evidence of historical perspective and comprehensive of the problem in its full scope. Such an article is "The Challenge to Israel" from the pen of Prof. William Orton.

Professor Orton understands the Jewish problem in the modern world and in the United States particularly, and its relation to anti-Semitism very well. He knows the increasing pressure which is being put on Jewish life in those countries where freedom and democracy seem to have been established and given the Jew equality with all other peoples. He knows of the social segregation. He knows of the obstacles placed in the way of education for his children, the economic disabilities ~~which~~ which the Jewish workingman and woman and the professional man and woman encounter daily. He knows of the increasing intellectual anti-semitism.

For example he speaks of, "With college over, the question of career becomes urgent. And here we strike the gravest fact of all. While

the Jewish rate of increase holds its own with that of other stocks, the sphere of possible employment has undergone a marked and deliberate restriction in recent years. To which of the professions shall the young Jew turn with - let us not say an even chance, let us say a sporting chance - of success? Perhaps the law is still open; but consider the competitive handicap if he would be a doctor, a dentist, a teacher, an accountant, anything that depends on general patronage. How much harder must he work, how much more able must he be, how much more humble pie must he eat, to get as far as his non-Jewish colleagues, merit for merit. Suppose he turns to finance. He will early discover the force of conscious anti-semitism wherever the influence of one of our greatest banking houses may reach - and that is very far. He will discover the extent to which ^{that} ~~the~~ policy sets the tone of conservative firms everywhere. Bitterest of all, he will find a scarcely warmer welcome from many prominent firms of Jewish ownership, which prefer to attract Gentiles, if only for shop-window purposes. If of exceptional ability, he may be hired and put to work behind the scenes, where others will pick his brains for a remuneration held down by the narrowness of his alternative employments. Possibly - probably indeed - he will concentrate with success on the sole task of making money; what else can he make? From the standpoint of life, of personality, he will be luckiest if he can find a vocation that he can pursue mainly alone. We hear much, and from Jews themselves, of the ineradicable individualism of the Jew;

but who can say how much of it is a forced habit, forced by the growing sentiment of extrusion? And the number of strictly individual vocations in America is shrinking at a tremendous pace; not merely in business, finance and the professions, but in art, letters, and science as well. The consequences are visible in the concentration of Jewish economic life in a few - a very few - secondary trades and in the increasing severity of the struggle for career in the world at large."

That man knows whereof he speaks. That's the most desperate problem facing American Jewry today. We haven't been fully awakened to the realization of the problem.

Of course, Prof. Orton has no remedy. He offers no solution. Like Heywood Broun in his book "Christians Only" which I reviewed some time ago, he is able to see the cancer but can't describe a cure. I, for one, am skeptical of all these good-will movements which have been abroad in the land in recent years, of Rabbis and ministers getting together and telling each other what wonderful fellows they are, how exalted their faiths are. They avoid the ugly realities of life. I am still to find a good-will preacher getting up before a Christian congregation and talking to them on the one subject of importance, namely, "Why are Jews excluded from employment?" Because they are Jews! Why is the Jew being undermined by the policy of exclusion? What will become of the tens of thousands of

young Jews and Jewesses, entitled to earn a living, when they find themselves shut out? What will become of the economic stability of this country when these spirits, and rightfully so, become a source of unrest in this land?

Prof. Orton proceeds to analyze some of the fundamental factors which are responsible for the schism between Jew and Gentile. Here he enters the realm of race psychology and group culture which is to my mind, debateable ground. Here opinion prevails rather than fact. But the opinions of Prof. Orton are nevertheless challenging and to us highly complimentary and because they are complimentary I wish to speak of them this morning.

There are two things among many others, declares this economist, which separate the Jewish outlook on life from the Gentile's of Western World, which obstacles are deep-rooted by virgin attitudes which somehow can not be reconciled. The first of these is that the Nordic has lost faith in his culture, while the Jew's faith in his, is unshaken. The Western European mind has lost faith in itself, in its institutions, in its religion, in its democracy, in the very scientific achievement of which it boasted.

"Post-war America has produced a literature of discontent that is almost unparalleled in the world." Everywhere there is a lack of affirmation in values. The best that philosophy and science have left to offer is a sort of "sterile neo-Stoicism." It

has no faith left by which man can live. There is a world of truth in that. All you have to do is read "The Modern Temper" of Mr. Krutch to understand what a waive of pessimism, disillusion and negation has swept over the mind of the Western world. What is the case with the Jew? And here I quote from Prof. Orton:

"And is the Jew differently placed or constituted in this respect? It is both his curse and his blessing that he is. Stripped through the centuries of every chance to pin his hope on transitory values, purged by sword and fire of all the vested interests of corporate living, the Jew has a direct hold on life itself where the Nordic clutches it only with an apparatus of concepts, institutions, rationalized ends and purposes. For this reason it is not, generally speaking, within the power of the Jewish mind - as it certainly is within that of the Gentile - to undermine the incentives to living. The thought of the Jew may be somber, pessimistic, tragic; it is hardly every decadent. His blood believes, let brain do what it may. Let him think and talk and live and die an apostate, the race in him utters from day to day its pragmatic affirmation. You will hear shrewd and cynical appraisal of men and motives oftener from Jewish lips than from Gentile; but you will seldom hear, even of this civilization, the doubt, the disparagement, the denial of its hopes and ends that are

common among Gentile intellectuals. As many Jews as Gentiles, no doubt, reject it; but the Jewish rejection will more frequently have the strength of passion and hatred where the Gentile gets no farther than distaste, aversion, disillusion.

"It is in virtue of this quality that the Jew has never been tempted to hope or believe too much. Give the Gentile a bit of new truth, and what does he do with it? Not content with merely living it, he must needs spin out of it a whole series of concepts and theorems, which presently he will institutionalize and fashion into a system. With this system he will transform cultures, build empires, found schools of thought or religion or jurisprudence, and run energetically about the world proclaiming that all who do not believe in his system are damned irrevocably to the specially constructed part of the system called Hell (every system has its Hell.) That is the way of life for the Gentile. Consider what he did with the prophet of Galilee. Christianity never bothered itself much about understanding the poor prophet - and now it dare not. All it saw was the starting point for a new system, for the most staggering superstructure of metaphysics and theology that ever dazed mankind - but a system, none the less, that made history. Now the system fails, breaks up, collapses, as sooner or later systems do. The Jew quietly

goes on living, unshaken, not even disillusioned - and is hated for it. But the Jew was never tempted to put his faith in the extravagances of any such system. Three gods in one, vicarious atonements, transubstantiations, pre-election, redemption, damnation - the Jew could not attain such heights of Gentile architecture, though he tried hard at various times and places. He sat in the cellar, or the dungeon, or the gutter - waiting and reviled. His god did not dwell on the summit of any such system. His god sat in the gutter with him. For it may truly be said that where the Nordic god is authority and sanction for the Nordic system, the Jewish god is just a necessary postulate to the Jewish way of living and feeling. The god of the Jew is the way, the truth, and the life. The god of the Nordic is the rationalization of the Nordic will to power, the ultimate excuse for doing what that will to power dictates. Those who reject such things are forced to deny him. The Jew does not have to deny his god in order to achieve freedom."

That's a remarkable statement on the part of a professor of economics and sociology, student of religion. There seems to be here an insight into an ancient religion of an ancient people that has lived long and experienced much, not driven to the excess of optimism or despair, that faces life squarely, realistically and clings to life because life is good. When you sum up what is to be said about Jewish

philosophy, that pretty well sums it up.

He finds another basic difference between Judaism and Christianity or the religion of the Western world and that is this: in the realm of ethics, Christian Ethics is ultra-human. It demands the impossible. Jewish Ethics is distinguished by its realism, its intense humanism. It grows out of human experiences and history, not out of metaphysics and theology. There is no saintliness and asceticism in Jewish ethics, just a broad humanity. The Jew never made much adieu about saints. He was always suspicious of them. "The Heavens belong to the Lord, the earth He gave to the children of man." In fact we have a definite statement of one of our Rabbis, "Don't try to be too pious. It is not good for you." (Hebrew) "The commandment which I command you this day is not in heaven, but it is very near to you." So that no man will go up and bring it down.

Jewish ethics were given so that a man may live by it in a happy life. (Hebrew) "In order that thy days may be lengthened. (Hebrew) "That it might be good unto thee."

Jewish ethics thus called for no such nerve-racking idealism. Therefore, according to Prof. Orton, Jewish Ethics is vital and persistent. and Christianity with the system broken down, is itself breaking down. Marriage and the family, parenthood, are institutions disappearing in the Western World. The only place of refuge for them still is Israel.

Anti-Jewish prejudice persists, will persist for these reasons mentioned, for many other reasons indicated by the writer.

What's the answer? What shall the Jew do today to answer? According to Prof. Orton the answer is to be found in the courageous acceptance on the part of the Jew, of his destiny. The answer is not in the realm of assimilation. I read again from the article:

"Faith, fortitude - the very words are a challenge. And I see as I write them the slow smile dawn on Jewish lips, half pitiful, half sardonic, as if to say, where will this fellow blunder next? I know - who does not? - that baffling paradox in Jewish eyes, uniquely blent of pity and irony, arrogance and humility, abnegation and invincible disdain."

Another bit of metaphysics, "in Jewish eyes," to the Jew, baffling to the non-Jew. Well I haven't found it.

Here he speaks to the young Jew:

"It is the young generation of Jews rather than of Gentiles that is embarrassed by the idealistic tradition. The Gentile can simply dismiss it: refuse, or find himself comfortably unable, to accept it. The Jew of today, unable either to accept or reject it, takes refuge under a cultured and immaculate skepticism. For he is tempted, much of the time successfully, to play the game of adjustment for its own sake. It is second nature to him. Faith in the heritage the destiny of the race becomes

mere confidence in the cleverness with which he can avail himself of the situation as it is, and ends perhaps in a denial of the possibility, even the desirability of change. What was wisdom in the old generation becomes craft in the young. Pride in that craft, a secret and nihilistic pride, fulfills the place of pride in that wisdom - almost but never quite. If only their race would let them go; but it will not, altogether. It clutches unexpectedly, wrecking where it has been ignored. That is why the "assimilated" Jew is seldom entirely happy - because assimilation is essentially a negative gesture, and the blood is affronted. That is the peril of many a mixed marriage entered upon as a compromise, a surrender, rather than as an alliance, a new challenge to destiny. The Jewish heart is then secretly shamed by the children."

Assimilation then is not the solution. What is his destiny? Simply this declares Prof. Orton: "His destiny is nothing short of the salvaging of Western Civilization." The Western world stands today sorely in need of those spiritual verities which the Jew and the Jew alone can give it. These values are first, the Western world needs the Jew's theism, his God idea, which according to the author is the only God idea acceptable to the modern mind, a pragmatic theism, a God which is a way of life for man, a religion which concerns itself not so much with dogma, but with deeds and conduct and life and he recalls that great sentence from the Bible, "To judge the cause of the poor and the needy, is to know God."

In other words, the Western world stands in need of the God of Israel.

Secondly it needs Israel's humanism. It needs Israel's code of ethics, its broad human ethics which is concerned with the day to day welfare of ordinary men and women. The pragmatic quality of Jewish morality- the pragmatic quality of Jewish morality. How often we have discussed it from this very pulpit. Judaism has lived with human beings for centuries and it knows the limitations of life and therefore doesn't expect the impossible of man and it doesn't like man to go through life burdened with guilt or sin because they have not attained these things. It asks man to live clean, wholesome lives, finer, nobler, day by day.

And lastly, the Western World needs the Jewish sense of social solidarity. He calls it "social stamina." The sense of all belonging to one family, the sons of humanity, not as the machine but as an organism where each part benefits from and must benefit from the other part.

It was the Jew who gave mankind the thought of the human being as belonging to one brotherhood, to one fellowship.

Now the author asks himself: "Is all this that I am saying fantastic? Is there such a people, Israel today? Am I talking about some ancient people that long ago ceased to exist?"

"The Israel you write of - it is Jews who will say this - is the idealized Israel of an ancient dream. Look around you at the Israel of reality, of twentieth-century New York. Where, even in the best of it - formalistic, old or liberalizing new - will you find the

substance of that dream today? And why, in any case, should Jews bother themselves with any such world mission? Is not their own existence problem enough for them?"

"True enough that the things must begin, with the reacceptance by the Jews themselves of their own tradition: a re-expression, a re-interpretation, for themselves of their own culture. So much is already in progress, on a scale actually comparable with the golden age in Spain. Only here and there, as yet, is that renaissance conceived in its relation to the Western world. For the most part, as yet, it is a reassertion - sometime an aggressive, an exclusive reassertion - of Jewish genius, for Jews. And that is the immediate necessity. Beyond that it is not necessary now to speculate. For a destiny evaded is a doom; and the instinct of the race is yet alive."

"It proceeds by no rational dialectic. To argue the larger case would be presumption. It is not in payment of any debt that the Jewish redemption of Western culture can be urged. There can be only one debt: the debt indicated in Lewisoohn's fine phrase, "Being a Jew is what he owes mankind."

"It is not in virtue of any claim the world can make upon them. It is because they have been despised and rejected of men;

because they have suffered and sacrificed as no race has had to suffer or sacrifice, because there is even yet so little room for them, so slender a security, in the richest nation of the earth, that they will come at last bringing new blessing to the world that has reviled them, offering that which cannot be taken from them to those that sit in darkness and the shadow of death."

It sounds like the best sermon of the best Rabbi.

It is good, my friends, to be told by a non-Jew that the Jew has something to offer modern civilization out of his own spiritual wealth, his treasure troves. That has been our appeal to our Jews right along. What have we been saying to our people? We have been saying to them and their youth especially, that for science, technology, for organization, for the knowledge about the machine, even for the knowledge of the arts we must come to the Gentiles. In those fields, although we have made marked and significant contributions in those realms, we are learners, not teachers - we are the pupils, they are the teachers. But when it comes to matters of faith and morality, of ideals, of ideals of family life, of marriage, of parenthood, of ideals of purity, of holiness, justice, love, of human worth, of human dignity, of the sanctity of home life, - of these we are the teachers, they are the learners. Our's is the ancient wisdom and eternal flame. That's what we have been saying to our people, to our young people. "Here is your spiritual home, here is the congenial

home for your dreams and your visions. Here is prophecy and here is the Magna Carta of freedom, human justice, peace."

The world has over and over again in its hours of darkness and defeat turned to our code and our faith. Why are you following some will-o-the-wisp in some alien field? Drink deep of the waters of your ancient culture and be strengthened.

It is good to hear the non-Jew re-echo this thought. Perhaps when the non-Jew will say it and keep on saying it, the Jew will come to believe it.

The challenge to Israel is the same challenge as the one pronounced over three thousand years ago: "And ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation," that was pronounced at the foot of Mt. Sinai. That is Israel's mission, its cross and its crown, - 'to be a light unto the nations.'

And now when the nations are facing darkness and doom and disaster and the whole civilization which they built by their own hands has toppled over their heads, they are again turning to that light which was kindled thousands of years ago in the deserts of Arabia, by the rivers of Babylon and which all the storms of these thousands of years have not extinguished - a light unto the world.

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open question is more significant than what they say; but their conclusions tend to become more and more pessimistic. ("The established order suffers from a chronic and growing *malaise*," writes that ex-champion of the Nordic, Mr. Lothrop Stoddard. "There is increasing dissatisfaction with what is, coupled with a restless and rather aimless search after the new. Faith decays. Lastly, men lose interest in many things hitherto deemed of vital import. . . . An impressive body of evidence from several distinct angles clearly tends to show that our civilization is nearing its end.") Not merely its accomplishments, but its ideals begin to pall. The sense of direction grows faint within us. The hands that built the machine are too weary to control it, the eyes too dim to hold the distant vision. Noisily and with frenetic capers we reaffirm our pride in our achievement; but the voices lack conviction, the gestures seem a little ridiculous even while we make them.

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With college over, the question of career becomes urgent. And here we strike the gravest fact of all. While the Jewish rate of increase holds its own with that of other stocks, the sphere of possible employment has undergone a marked and deliberate restriction in recent years. To which of the professions shall the young Jew turn with—let us not say an even chance, let us say a sporting chance—of success? Perhaps the law is still open; but consider the competitive handicap if he would be a doctor, a dentist, a teacher, an accountant, anything that depends on general patronage. How much harder must he work, how much more able must he be, how much more humble pie must he eat, to get as far as his non-Jewish colleagues, merit for merit. Suppose he turns to finance. He will early discover the force of conscious anti-Semitism wherever the influence of one of our greatest banking houses may reach—and that is very far. He will discover the extent to which that policy sets the tone of conservative firms everywhere. Bitterest of all, he will find a scarcely warmer welcome from many prominent firms of Jewish ownership, which prefer to attract Gentiles, if only for shop-window purposes. If of exceptional ability, he may be hired and put to work behind the scenes, where others will pick his brains for a remuneration held down by the narrowness of his alternative

THE CHALLENGE

employments. Possibly—probably indeed—he will concentrate with success on the sole task of making money; what else can he make? From the standpoint of life, of personality, he will be luckiest if he can find a vocation that he can pursue mainly alone. We hear much, and from Jews themselves, of the ineradicable individualism of the Jew; but who can say how much of it is a forced habit, forced by the growing sentiment of extrusion? And the number of strictly individual vocations in America is shrinking at a tremendous pace: not merely in business, finance, and the professions, but in art, letters, and science as well. The consequences are visible in the concentration of Jewish economic life in a few—a very few—secondary trades, and in the increasing severity of the struggle for career in the world at large. Other consequences which we shall presently consider are less visible. Let us glance first at certain other, less visible, factors in the segregation.

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Pthe Jewish question gives offense. This one, far from being an exception, is likely to offend more than most. Let me state, therefore, at the outset that it is not the sort of subject one writes about for fun. Or for money. There are plenty of other subjects, controversial subjects, in which the limits of possible injury to either side are fairly understood, and no vital hurt is likely to befall. But this subject is different. It is like one of those quarrels between lovers arising from some trifle that suddenly flares up in symbolic significance of deep and radical division, in which love and life may irretrievably go down. None the less, every student of Western culture, especially American culture, has at some time to wrestle with it. The existence of the Jewish people is a perpetual challenge to the Gentile world. The subject follows where other subjects are left behind. It will not be ignored.

I look out through the pine trunks of the high wood in which I write, out over farmlands and townships and the distant river, to where the hills range couchant in their eternally arrested leap toward the west. A train is crawling by the river; very faintly the noise of it comes through sunny space to me in my sea of rocks and last year's leaves. Now the smoke is gone; the noontide silence falls again . . . and my mind goes back to those other hills, six thousand miles away, from which the patriarch first looked westward toward

their own tradition: a reëxpression, a reinterpretation, for themselves of their own culture. So much is already in progress, on a scale actually comparable with the golden age in Spain. Only here and there, as yet, is that renaissance conceived in its relation to the Western world. For the most part, as yet, it is a reassertion—sometimes an aggressive, an exclusive reassertion—of Jewish genius, for Jews. And that is the immediate necessity. Beyond that it is not necessary now to speculate. For a destiny evaded is a doom; and the instinct of the race is yet alive.

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any debt that the Jewish redemption of Western culture can be urged. There can be only one debt: the debt indicated in Lewisohn's fine phrase, "Being a Jew is what he owes mankind." It is not in virtue of any claim the world can make upon them. It is *because* they have been despised and rejected of men; *because* they have suffered and sacrificed as no race has had to suffer or sacrifice; *because* there is even yet so little room for them, so slender a security, in the richest nation of the earth—that they will come at last bringing new blessing to the world that has reviled them, offering that which cannot be taken from them to those that sit in darkness and the shadow of death.



CERTAINTY

BY DOROTHY SEAGER

I *SHOULD* not be startled
To see you in my door,
Crying, "I have come to stay."
Nothing more.

*I should only let you in
Quietly and say,
"The fire still burns. I heard your steps
For a long way."*

life from which the *raison d'être* has imperceptibly departed.) It is true that science, having finally dissipated the world of everyday experience and expanded the universe in inconceivable dimensions, ends by assuring the layman that he may consider himself still at liberty to believe in some kind of a god if he happens to be that kind of a person; but for the sort of faith men live by, neither it nor philosophy has any firm ground to offer. (Nor is there any longer in the Western mind the strength to utter a *credo quia absurdum*.)

And is the Jew differently placed or constituted in this respect? It is both his curse and his blessing that he is. Stripped through the centuries of every chance to pin his hope on transitory values, purged by sword and fire of all the vested interests of corporate living, the Jew has a direct hold on life itself where the Nordic clutches it only with an apparatus of concepts, institutions, rationalized ends and purposes. For this reason it is not, generally speaking, within the power of the Jewish mind—as it certainly is within that of the Gentile—to undermine the incentives to living. The thought of the Jew may be somber, pessimistic, tragic; it is hardly ever decadent. His blood believes, let brain do what it may. Let him think and talk and live and die an apostate, the race in him utters from day to day its pragmatic affirmation. You will hear shrewd and cynical appraisal of men and motives oftener from Jewish lips than from Gentile; but you will seldom hear, even of this civilization, the doubt, the disparagement, the denial of its hopes and ends that are common among Gentile intellectuals. As many Jews as Gentiles, no doubt, reject it; but the Jewish rejection will more frequently have the strength of passion and hatred where the Gentile gets no farther than distaste, aversion, disillusion.

For some of this difference race is

no doubt responsible; for some of it, history. I am not concerned here with causes. The dynamic outcome of the two factors is an element of Jewish psychology that I am tempted to call, at the risk of a contradiction in terms, pragmatic idealism. Pragmatic, because the experience of the Jews has been such that at no time did their faith, their hope, dare get far away from the brute facts of circumstance and human nature; idealism, for lack of a better word, to imply the spirit that still finds life worth while when all its extrinsic sanctions have been denied or torn away.

It is in virtue of this quality that the Jew has never been tempted to hope or believe *too much*. Give the Gentile a bit of new truth, and what does he do with it? Not content with merely living it, he must needs spin out of it a whole series of concepts and theorems, which presently he will institutionalize and fashion into a System. With this System he will transform cultures, build empires, found schools of thought or religion or jurisprudence, and run energetically about the world proclaiming that all who do not believe in his System are damned irrevocably to a specially constructed part of the System called Hell (every System has its Hell). That is the way of life—for the Gentile. Consider what he did with the prophet of Galilee. Christianity never bothered itself much about understanding the poor prophet—and now it dare not. All it saw was the starting point for a new System, for the most staggering superstructure of metaphysics and theology that ever dazed mankind—but a System, none the less, that made history. Now the System fails, breaks up, collapses, as sooner or later Systems do. The Jew quietly goes on living, unshaken, not even disillusioned—and is hated for it. But the Jew was never tempted to put his faith in the extravagances of any such System. Three

gods in one, vicarious atonements, transubstantiations, preselection, redemption, damnation—the Jew could not attain such heights of Gentile architecture, though he tried hard at various times and places. He sat in the cellar, or the dungeon, or the gutter—waiting and reviled. His god did not dwell on the summit of any such System. His god sat in the gutter with him. For it may truly be said that where the Nordic god is authority and sanction for the Nordic System, the Jewish god is just a necessary postulate to the Jewish way of living and feeling. The god of the Jew is the way, the truth, and the life. The god of the Nordic is the rationalization of the Nordic will to power, the ultimate excuse for doing what that will to power dictates. Those who reject such things are forced to deny him. The Jew does not have to deny his god in order to achieve freedom.

III

A similar contrast is revealed in a comparison of the Jewish ethic, not with that of Jesus, which is in the main a part of it, but with that of Christianity. The Jewish ethic is distinguished by its realism, its intense humanism. It grows out of experience and history, not out of metaphysics and theology. It does not demand the impossible in compliance with the postulates of an ultra-human system. It parts company from the Christian, not with Jesus, but with the abnormal—supernormal, if you like—Paul. For it is inspired by too deep a knowledge, too profound a love of ordinary human nature ever to nail it on a cross of incompatible facts and aspirations.

True enough that the Christian record is studded with jewels which stand out in fantastic brilliance against the sense of sin and shortcoming which is necessary to keep the Christian soul

at tension. But the heroes of the Jewish ethic do not have to be saints and ascetics; and the man or woman of today has more to learn from Gluckel Hameln than from Saint Theresa. The Jewish symbolism speaks of a broad humanity rather than a narrow sainthood, of a pattern that accepts on equal terms all the fructifying possibilities of human nature. It does not inculcate the nerve-racking tension of Christian idealism—compare, if you doubt it, the atmosphere of a "good" Christian family with that of a corresponding Jewish one. And for that reason the Jewish ethic shows a vitality, a persistence, in high contrast with that of the Christian West. Again, the dynamic West must deny its tradition in order to achieve freedom: the Jew can move and breathe freely in his own tradition without the agony—maybe the spiritual suicide—of abjuration.

There follows a momentous consequence. Gentile, particularly Nordic institutions, human enough in their origin, become under the architectural impulse of the West parts of the elaborate conceptual and social System that is Nordic civilization, with the result that as the breakup of that System approaches, they also suffer tremendous strain and are in fact faced with probable dissolution, notwithstanding that no substitutes may be discernible for the enduring needs they originally satisfied. Such imperiled institutions are, as is well known, marriage, parenthood, the family. Their disappearance is everywhere discussed, and in the great cities is actually in progress. The prospect is viewed both with equanimity and with apprehension, but it is nowhere denied. Among many other observers, Bertrand Russell, in a recent essay, admits it very frankly. Except within an economically privileged minority—which perhaps will not be indefinitely tolerated—

is disastrous as to Jewish rights and interests." But he might have added—perhaps in his heart he did—a prayer for the success of the Zionists in their real, their unheard-of enterprise: the creation of a living, toiling community that shall be primarily a symbol, in precisely the same sense in which bits of colored cloth are symbols to other peoples. Even so conceived, one may doubt whether Zionism will be enough. But whatever else there may be—and it is the purport of this paper to suggest something else—will not demand less faith or less fortitude.

Faith, fortitude—the very words are a challenge. And I see as I write them the slow smile dawn on Jewish lips, half pitiful, half sardonic, as if to say, Where will this fellow blunder next? I know—who does not?—that baffling paradox in Jewish eyes, uniquely blent of pity and irony, arrogance and humility, abnegation and invincible disdain.

"In them shall all the nations of the earth be blessed"—it is the young generation of Jews rather than of Gentiles that is embarrassed by the idealistic tradition. The Gentile can simply dismiss it: refuse, or find himself comfortably unable, to accept it. The Jew of to-day, unable either to accept or reject it, takes refuge under a cultured and immaculate skepticism. For he is tempted, much of the time successfully, to play the game of adjustment for its own sake. It is second nature to him. Faith in the heritage, the destiny, of the race becomes mere confidence in the cleverness with which he can avail himself of the situation as it is, and ends perhaps in a denial of the possibility, even the desirability of change. What was wisdom in the old generation becomes craft in the young. Pride in that craft, a secret and nihilistic pride, fulfils the place of pride in that wisdom—almost, but never quite. If only their race would let them go; but it will not, altogether.

It clutches unexpectedly, wrecking where it has been ignored. That is why the "assimilated" Jew is seldom entirely happy—because assimilation is essentially a negative gesture, and the blood is affronted. That is the peril of many a mixed marriage entered upon as a compromise, a surrender, rather than as an alliance, a new challenge to destiny. The Jewish heart is then secretly shamed by the children. In such situations faith and courage fail. And last—for only at that point can it enter—comes the inward peril that Lewisohn alone, I think, has dared to point out: "We must expel from blood and brain the most terrible of all the results of our long persecution—a shadow of our persecutors' estimate of us. Not our greatest have quite escaped that curse." But under that curse one can achieve nothing. What, in any case, is there to achieve?

V

The achievement—let me state it baldly—is the salvaging of Western civilization. That is the challenge to Israel.

The word diaspora, I read, has two meanings. It may mean, as our Bible has it (Deut. xxviii, 25) a "tossing to and fro among all the kingdoms." It may mean, in the Septuagint version of the passage, a sowing as of seed: that seed in which all the nations of the earth shall be blessed. All the nations of the earth—not Jews as such, not Gentiles as such: the full humanity of the Messianic vision. Is there faith in Israel, is there need in Christendom, to reap that harvest?

As to the former, it is not mine to judge. I can only affirm, as a student of these things, that there are yet alive in Israel powers and possibilities of which the Western world stands in sorest need. Among these I have chosen three for emphasis. First, its

(1) theism: as I think, the only theism that is still possible to Western man—a pragmatic theism, in which the god is literally a way of life. For Israel never insisted that other people subscribe to its *beliefs*, nor were its own sins ever matters merely of a wrong idea. Its errors were always of the deed, its mandates always of the life among men. "He judged the cause of the poor and needy. Was not this to know me, saith the Lord?"

(2) Second, therefore, its humanism—if that term may be broad enough for an ethic that cares even for the animals. Israel was foremost in the fight for humanism in the strict historical sense. But along with the passion for disinterested thought she has retained, in Einstein as in Spinoza, the keen sense of life in the concrete, the keen concern for the day-to-day welfare of ordinary men and women: a concern immeasurably keener than that of those beneficent governments which slaughter millions of them for their own good in the name of abstract ideas and the precise interpretation of phrases.

(3) Third, therefore, its social stamina. It has been said that the Jew can judge, but not create, values. Yet in those values which, as institutions, make for social solidarity, Israel, despite its class distinctions, its own caste system, is richer than we. Naturally so; since its life as a society is less dependent upon extrinsic factors, and the forms of that life are less in bondage to a conceptual system which those factors are rapidly demolishing. Israel—chaotic, slipshod, disorderly, as it appears to the efficient Nordic—has yet the life of an organism: Western society takes on more and more the aspect of a machine, held together by the brute pressures of necessity, drenched in the tears and blood of the humankind it ought to cherish and foster. How much even of the palliatives that temper the fate of its unfortunates does it not owe to the

(4) Jewish sense of pity, the Jewish concern for suffering men and women?

There are things Israel cannot do, necessary things, in which the Nordic has excelled and of which Israel reaps the benefit. The architectural impulse, the urge to plan and design and abstract order—these are essential wherever huge masses of people have to live and work together. But untempered they end, as they have ended, in a generalized notion of mankind itself, a reduction of flesh and blood to mere averages, formulae, stereotypes, terms in a series, a dismemberment of the concrete individual person by countless batteries of calculating machines. How much of modern fiction and modern drama are an exposition of precisely that theme!

There are qualities of which Israel stands in need if ever its vision, and ours, is to be realized: nerve—I will not say courage, for that may be passive: a dash of the gambler; the physical intrepidity of the pioneer that will not reckon costs or risks too closely; these also being things that untempered may make—have made, times out of number—for inhumanity. Why does it seem fantastic to suggest that from Israel may come, can come, the inward guidance of which Western civilization stands in need? Why this instinctive incredulity on both sides?

The Israel you write of—it is Jews who will say this—is the idealized Israel of an ancient dream. Look around you at the Israel of reality, of twentieth-century New York. Where, even in the best of it—formalistic old, or liberalizing new—will you find the substance of that dream to-day? And why, in any case, should Jews bother themselves with any such world mission? Is not their own existence problem enough for them?

(5) True enough that the thing must begin, as it has begun, with a reacceptance by the Jews themselves of

- 1/ Occasionally one reads -
- 2/ Such an article - Prof. William Orotin - fine, complete
Keen - objectiveness + Sym - Venous
- 3/ "The Challenge to Israel" - Jew, still chall. to gentle -
we are as much a problem - "Albatross"
Still ^{the} mystery - For some, a bone,
- The Jew, The Jew! He is the student - Calicut -
millennium - Friend - footbyer - Wardner -
Nationalist, provis,
- Cannot understand him - With books -
- 4/ He understands the Jew, position - Anti Sem - ① Pressure -
social segregation, silent "immense Claw"
(And)
- ① No solution - Brown - Cancer
② Sceptical & food - will - Menace - Stability.
- 5/ Orotin analyzes some of the fundamental factors

7.1.11

1/ Occasionally our reader - world is moving forward.
Such an article - Prof William Ostor - fine, comprehensive
grasp, ^{historical perspective} keen, penetrating mind, objective, plus sympathy,
free from both venom ^{or} honey.

2/ Still the "Challenge to the Gentile" ^{we are as much a problem to Jewish} He is still the mystery, ^{as we are to ourselves - "Elphinstone"}
enigma. He cannot be ignored or overlooked. For some a
bowl ^{which} cannot be swallowed or expected. For others
an amazing biological & social phenomenon, waiting eager
for ^{analysis} & research & analysis. The Jew! The Jew! He is ^{the} ^{most}
art, human in Warsaw - His rel. presented in Russia -
10 in Nazi - saying say of that in Germany - He is cabinet
member in England, Supreme Court Justice in U.S. - ^{Ullrichman}
in ^{hale} that, ^{Pariser} in the ^{philosophy} ^{teaching} & ^{East} ^{Europe} -
He is Freud, Einstein, He is brotherly & sisterly -
He is building his Homeland! There he is among
all the big boys, the world, he is a ^{keeper} ^{of} ^{values} ^{people}
Naturalist, ^{anatomist}, ^{radiologist} ^{black} ^{war} ^{front}
+ ^{secret} ^{the} ^{Jew!} ^{The} ^{Jew!} The gentile simply cannot
understand him! He is in the way. And so they write
books about him - and articles - most, then ^{preferably} ^{unreal!}
Occasionally - a sensible and helpful statement. ^{Or} ^{for} ^{the} ^{W.S.}

3/ He understands the J. position in the world to-day as far as Anti-S. is
concerned, fully. Oppression on J. people in Am. is constantly in
creasing. Social segregation, ^{intellectual} ^{barriers} in the way of ^{providing} ^{education} for
his children, the silent "numerous clauses", (Don't - "When calls, etc.")
① He has no remedies - they would harm - Christian only - they stand
a chance when they see it - that's all that's all!
② Skeptical & good-will movements - don't get down to ugly

[illegible]

3) He understands the J. position in the world to-day as far as Am. is concerned, fully. Oppression on J. people in Am. is constantly increasing. Social segregation, ^{intellectual and physical} obstacles in the way of ~~providing~~ education for his children, the silent "numerous clauses", (Don't - "when calls, etc.")

① He has no remedies - They would know - Christian only - They stand a chance when they see it - That's no cure!

② Skeptical, good-will movements - don't get down to ugly

realities Employment - Menace - Talk of stability of system -

4. Otton analyzes some, the fundamental factors at work which are responsible for the schism bet. Jew & Gentile. Now he enters the field, race psychology and group cultures, which will ^{never, thing} ever be debatably ground. But his premises are challenging and provocative.

(A) The Nordic has lost faith in his culture. The Jew's faith in his is unshaken. The Western world has lost faith in itself, its institutions, ~~the~~ even in the values, its scientific accomplishments. "Post war Amer. has produced a literature, a sentiment that is almost unparalleled." Every where there is lack of affirmation in values. The best that cont. phil. has left to offer is a "sterile neo-Stoicism" It has no faith left by which men can live.

(B) But the Jew has an unshaken pragmatic idealism (Justi)

II. Christian Ethics is ultra-human. It demand the impossible. J. Ethics is depriving what by its reaction, its intense humanitarianism. It grows out of human experiences and history, not out of metaphysics and theology. The modern movement (Ch. is saintliness + asceticism). J. Ethics calls for no such "new-sounding theories of idealism": Broad-humanity.

(3/17/17) Therefore J. Ethics is v. full & persistent. And Ch. beats down - (J. Ethics is compatible with human freedom. West. Eur. must deny its Ch. tradition in order to achieve freedom). The institutions of marriage and

is a machine. Israel is a living organism

7. Is this fantastic? Is there such an Israel to-day? (Inst 4)

8. We must rediscover ourselves.

① It is for to be tried by non-Jews that we have something to give to modern civilization, not for our intensive spiritual treasures.

② That has been our appeal to our people right along -

③ For Re-education - we will go to them, for the way, life - for faith, for morality,

for the wisdom, being for human dignity, for unity - justice - and peace - with the man. strongly distrust we must turn to our own culture. Let us go to the ancient wisdom, and the eternal flame -

④ There has been our appeal to our youth.

We have Here is your spiritual home Here is the generally used phrase dream & hope 1132 117 IN

What deep & your people's life & the suffering there?
Here is peace & security, Here is justice, Here is
the magna charta of human right - freedom,
justice, peace.

The world has once and over again in its long & centuries repeated turned to our code our faith,

family
ideally

Rel
in
changing
world

What are you following some well-situated
in alien police?

אין ארץ ישראל
אין ארץ ישראל



is a machine - Israel is a living organism

7/ Is this fantastic? Is there such an Israel to-day?
(Quote 4)

8/ It is good to be told by non-Jew -

(1) This has been our appeal

(2) For Science - For the way of life. Ancient

(3) This has been our appeal to Youth - Here is
sp here - friendly world.

Write deep

Here is prophecy -

Magna Carta

The World has over taken again

ענין פילוסוף ע"פ ד"ר ויליאם וויט
ענין פילוסוף ע"פ ד"ר ויליאם וויט

Why, follow - well with the world

ענין פילוסוף ע"פ ד"ר ויליאם וויט
ענין פילוסוף ע"פ ד"ר ויליאם וויט

AN ABSTRACT OF THE ADDRESS

"HOW SHALL WE ANSWER THE CHALLENGE TO ISRAEL?"

BY

RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER
THE TEMPLE, SUNDAY, NOV. 15th, 1931

Occasionally one reads an article or a book about the Jewish people which gives one the pleasant sensation that the world is moving forward. Such an article is that of Prof. Orton in the November "Harper's", called "The Challenge to Israel."

The subject of the article suggests that the Jew is still as much a challenge to the Gentile as he ever was. He is as much a problem to the non-Jew as he is to himself. He is still the mystery, the enigma. For some he is an uncomfortable phenomenon, very much in the way. For others he is an amazing biologic and sociologic fact calling for eager research and analysis.

The Jew! the Jew! He is the student thrown out of the universities of Warsaw and Budapest. He is the man against whom ten millions of Nazis are singing medieval songs of hate in the modern cities of Germany. He is the cabinet member in England, the Supreme Court Justice in the United States. He is the millionaire in Wall Street and the pauper in half the countries of Europe. He is Freud, Bergson, and Einstein. He is bootlegger and racketeer. He is a homeless people building a national Homeland. He is nationalist and assimilationist, radical and ^{reactionary} rationalist, pious and heretic, agnostic and martyr, servile and proud. The Jew! The Jew! The Gentiles simply can not understand him. And so they write books about him, most of them preposterously unreal full either of too much venom or of too much honey. Occasionally there appears an intelligent study of the Jewish people which combines objectiveness,

sympathy and historical perspective. Professor Orton's article belongs to this category.

He understands the Jewish position in the world today and in the United States fully. He knows the anti-semitic pressure which is consistently increasing, the obstacles in the way of education, the silent "numerous clouses," the economic disabilities under which the Jewish workingman and the professional man labors.

Prof. Orton analyses some of the fundamental factors at work which are responsible for the chism between Jew and Gentile. They concern themselves with matters of race, psychology and group cultures. These are debatable subjects but Prof. Orton's opinions are nevertheless challenging and provocative.

The Nordic has lost faith in his culture. The Jew's faith in his is unshaken. The Western world has lost faith in itself, its institutions, even in the value of its scientific accomplishments. It has no faith left by which man can live. The Jew has an unshaken pragmatic idealism which saves him from utter despair and negation.

Prof. Orton likewise finds a great division between Christian and Jewish ethics. The one being ultra human based upon metaphysics and theology, the other realistic, based upon human experience and history.

The answer to the problem of persistent anti Jewishness, according to Prof. Orton, is to be found in the courageous acceptance on the part of the Jew of his destiny. It is not assimilation. Its destiny is the salvaging of Western civilization. The Western world stands in sorest needs of those verities which the Jew can give it, theism - the only theism possible to Western man, humanism - a broad human ethics concerned with the day to day welfare of ordinary men and women, and the sense of social solidarity.

It is good to be told by a non-Jew that the Jew has something of essential worth to contribute to modern civilization. It has been our message to our people right along. For science, technology, organization and the arts the Jew must turn to the Western world. In those realms, while he has made significant contributions, he is nevertheless pupil, not teacher. But for the way of life, for faith, morality, for the wisdom of living, for the human ideals of marriage, family, parenthood, sobriety, justice, love, human dignity, the Western world must turn, as it has always turned in its hours of darkness and defeat, to Israel.

Thus the cultures of Jew and Gentile are in a vital sense supplementary and mutually interdependent.

